



Sam Madison

Miami Dolphins NFL Football  
*'nPLAY Volunteer*



Karina Petroni

Professional Surfer  
*'nPLAY Volunteer*

For more information go to  
[www.nplayfoundation.org](http://www.nplayfoundation.org)

## // 'nPlay - Sam & Karina //

—Meg Kelly

**On the surface, professional surfer Karina Petroni and NFL great Sam Madison couldn't be more different. She grew up running through the jungles of Panama (her nickname was Mowgli), and he grew up playing Pop Warner football in a small Florida town. But scratch the surface and Karina and Sam have a lot in common. Both are gifted athletes, both were raised by parents who believed in giving back and both are working with 'nPLAY to fight childhood obesity.**

"My mom is a school teacher and my dad was a police officer," Sam says. "The idea that it takes a village to raise a child was part of who they were. I started working with kids when I was in college through the D.A.R.E. program."

From the beginning, Sam saw being part of the NFL as an opportunity bigger than playing football. It was a chance to reach kids. "I studied juvenile justice and wanted to help kids make different choices so they didn't wind up there. When I joined the Miami Dolphins, I set up my own foundation, Madison Avenue."

Sam got other professional athletes to join and they began going to schools and talking to kids about reaching their goals. "We tell them balancing what they eat with exercise will improve their focus and increase their energy. We want them to understand that a little bit of exercise and eating nutritious food will give them the results they want."

When Eric Cohen asked Sam if his foundation would work with 'nPLAY, Sam didn't hesitate. "We joined 'nPLAY because their commitment to fighting childhood obesity fits our goals. Our athletes go to one of 'nPLAY's schools, talk, and sometimes, cook with the kids. We bring a nutritionist in to teach them about what they're eating. We show them how healthy habits can help them reach goals they'd almost given up on."

One of the things Sam and Eric hear after these sessions is that the kids go home and educate the parents. "They start a chain reaction," says Sam, "that leads to achievement. Kids have heroes because they need them. They see that you can be from a farm, a single-parent home, or a town of six hundred, like me, and reach your goals. Success is about the choices you make."



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## 'nPlay Continued

Karina Petroni has never met Sam, but her message is the same. "I tell kids that understanding the relationship between food and exercise will help them determine how they perform. And that matters because how they perform is going to lead to opportunities – or not. I'm passionate about getting that message ingrained in kids' heads."

Since 2009, Karina has been going to schools and doing just that. "My dad passed away from a stroke. It was devastating, but something good came out of it. My brother started a foundation to help prevent strokes in others. Kids love talking to someone they can relate to, so my role in the foundation has been to go to schools."

Before Eric Cohen called and asked Karina to join 'nPLAY, she was a seasoned speaker. "I'd spoken with thousands of kids about leading active, healthy lifestyles. The more I do it, the more committed I am. America's youth is in such a vulnerable state. They need to understand how often they eat, how much they eat and the need to balance with exercise. They want to feel better, but don't know which way to choose. I love helping them make that choice. When Eric called I was beyond excited."

From their first conversation, the two hit it off. "We're both passionate about bringing exercise to kids. I want to be as vocal and physical as possible. I told Eric to call me up and send me to a school. I'll be there."

Karina hopes to be at an 'nPLAY school by spring. "I can't wait. I want to tell them our planet is incredible. There are so many amazing places to go and amazing people to meet, even at your neighborhood park. If you're healthy, there's so much you can experience."

To learn about bringing 'nPLAY to your child's school, go to:  
[www.nplayfoundation.org](http://www.nplayfoundation.org)

'nPLAY is a partner of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation.

— By Meg Kelly